

School Committee Meeting Minutes
Shirley Middle School
April 27, 2004

Present: Donald Parker, Chairperson
Paul Wilson (arrived at 7 p.m.)
Gary Bourassa
Hugh Muffoletto
Bob Prescott

Also Present: Dr. Thomas Scott, Superintendent
Patricia Stern, Business Manager
Joe Deguglielmo, DEAC representative

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m.

Public Participation:

Cliff Bailey, Shirley resident, addressed the committee by stating that after reviewing the superintendent's budget he feels that it is reasonable. He also stated that he feels the SPED budget should be presented as a line item within the school budget, not as a separate line item.

Mr. Parker announced that due to possible changes in the governor's budget no budget issues will be discussed at this meeting. Instead, a work session meeting will be held on May 4 at 6 p.m. at Shirley Middle School for budget discussions only. This rescheduling will provide ample time for both the business manager and superintendent to review any changes that may have occurred.

A concerned parent asked about MCAS scores in Shirley. She inquired as to why the scores for Shirley were lower than those of surrounding towns. She wondered if SPED students were tested. If so, were their scores responsible for lowering the test scores? Mr. Parker stated that the SPED students are tested and that several things are being done to prepare the students for their MCAS tests. Dr. Scott suggested that the parent contact Suzanne Mahoney so that Mrs. Mahoney could discuss these preparations with her.

Old Business:

Mr. Bourassa motioned to approve the minutes of March 15, 2004. Mr. Muffoletto seconded the motion. Motion was approved. Mr. Bourassa motioned to approve the minutes of the Executive Session of April 6, 2004. Mr. Muffoletto seconded the motion. Motion was approved. Mr. Bourassa motioned to approve the minutes for the April 12, 2004 meeting with the Joint Board of Selectmen. Mr. Muffoletto seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

Business Affairs:

Patricia Stern reviewed payroll warrant 341 totaling \$176,355.40. She also reviewed payroll warrant 841 for \$32,973.16.

New Business:

Dr. Scott introduced Janet Allison from NEASC to the committee. Ms. Allison reviewed the accreditation process for the elementary and middle schools. Ms. Allison explained that NEASC asks schools to engage in a self-study to identify strengths and needs for the school. The self-study should take approximately 2-3 years for those schools undertaking the initial accreditation process. This self-study should involve the professional staff as well as the school committee and community members. Once the self-study has been completed, a visiting committee is sent to the school for a peer review, typically lasting 4 days. An accreditation report is written after this visit. Ms. Allison stated that those districts that use the accreditation process wisely integrate the information in this report into what is happening in their school system. Within five years member schools should have implemented the recommendations made in the accreditation report.

Ms. Allison stated that the accreditation process helps work toward school improvement and it should ensure that the needs of the students are met through quality programs. This process should assure the board that its policies, plans, and procedures are sound and it should assure taxpayers that their money is being used for quality programs and services. Especially important at the high school level, this process informs college admission offices about the quality of student achievement records. Ms. Allison stated that the costs associated with becoming accredited are \$300 in application fees, \$1000 per elementary and middle school per year in membership fees and \$8-\$10,000 to host the visiting team (once every 10 years). Ms. Allison reiterated that this is a process that takes time and commitment.

At the end of Ms. Allison's review, Mr. Muffoletto asked if there is any type of framework established to help with the self-study. He was told that it is a very organized and structured procedure. Mr. Prescott asked about the failure rate. He was told that only 2 schools within the past 3 years have had their memberships terminated. He was also told that NEASC will not start the self-study process if a school is not deemed ready. Dr. Scott asked about the time commitment that the self-study would involve. Ms. Allison stated that staff members should participate in team meetings, possibly 3-4 half days a year. Staff could also meet in small groups after school or perhaps even several full days. Once the self-study begins, committees should meet several times a month. Before leaving, Ms. Allison stated that more information was available at www.neasc.org and www.lab.brown.edu/neasc.

Correspondence:

Mr. Parker stated that the letter included in the school committee packet will be discussed during the next meeting.

Information:

Information requested regarding software licenses recommended in the budget were given to committee members. Information was also provided regarding salary for non-union staff members. This data reflects what the proposed increases would be with a step and 3% increase as well as with a 3% increase only.

Dr. Scott also provided members with school choice information. As of January, 91 children in grades K-12 school choice out of district whereas 75 school choice in district in grades K-8. Information regarding children attending charter schools was also provided. Dr. Scott stated that Devens residents are doing well in the Shirley School District. Information about their progress was also provided.

Dr. Scott discussed the House budget executive summary. This indicates that \$80 million has been added to the circuit breaker program. More information should be available at the next meeting. Also, School Building Assistance was discussed. Shirley is currently 116 on a list of 400 communities waiting for assistance. If this passes, reimbursement could be expected within 1-2 years.

Dr. Scott informed the committee that the Burlington School Department has an agreement with the town to separate SPED out of district costs as a separate line item. The Burlington superintendent provided a copy of their agreement for the committee to review. Dr. Scott stated that the attorneys who represented Burlington also represent the town of Shirley. If the town of Shirley decides to move forward with the SPED line item we will have attorneys with experience in this matter.

Mr. Bourassa motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Muffoletto seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Karen Gutheil